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THE ADVANTAGE  
OF  
CORRECT THOUGHTS  
ON  
THE SINFULNESS OF SIN,  
A Sermon.  
WITH AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

*Observations on Antinomians and Arminians,*

BY

JOHN MARTIN. *Baptist Minister*

IF EVER WE ARE SAVED, SIN MUST FIRST APPEAR TO US ALL;  
AS IT DID TO THE APOSTLE, ABOVE MEASURE SINFUL.

DR. GOODWIN.

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## THE PREFACE.

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WHETHER it would be most prudent to leave the following pages to speak for themselves, or to give some account why they were published, was a question not soon decided: and even now, I am not certain that what follows will afford the reader much satisfaction.

Had there been no preface, some might have said, Does this man treat us with so little ceremony as to break in upon us without saying *why* he wishes to gain our attention? And now there is one, others may think my apology unwise. I can only say, could I have made a better, this would have been laid aside.

THE

P R E F A C E.

THE following sermon was neither composed, preached, \* nor published, by request. If therefore, I have erred, I only am to be blamed for my imprudence. But, as by publishing this discourse, I meant to serve, and not to injure society, if it should not be read, or be read without being a mean of producing any good effect, still, I shall have this consolation, that though I have mistaken desire for ability, I certainly had a desire to be useful to my fellow men.

Correct thoughts of the sinfulness of sin, are of such importance to all men, that, without them, none of us can have becoming thoughts of the grace of God, nor proper views of the world which now is, nor of that which is to come. But by *correct*, I do not mean such accurate thoughts of the evil of sin, as are without any alloy of error; no, I only mean those thoughts that are comparatively speaking correct, and such at least, as cannot be refuted.

\* The substance of that sermon was preached at GRAFTON STREET, SOHO, Nov. 2, 1794.

Many



## PREFACE.

Many have written on the sinfulness of sin ably, and to a very good purpose: but I know not of any author who has treated this subject on the plan of the following discourse. Nevertheless, he that could suppose such a subject, so handled, would attract general attention, might well be thought insane. To me, this folly cannot be imputed; yet, I hope, my labor will not be wholly in vain.

As to the Appendix, it may seem to some a *novel* performance: but men of reading will be of a different opinion. Whether what I have said of Antinomians and Arminians, be better, or worse, than what has been said before, within the same narrow limit, must be left to their determination.

This may be safely asserted, that in drawing up those few pages, I had nothing personal in view; but when so employed, I was, or thought I was, under the influence of that charity which doth not behave herself unseemly.

I am fully persuaded, that the enmity which God himself has put, between the seed of  
the

## PREFACE.

the serpent and the seed of the woman, cannot be removed :\* but I suspect, that in many schemes which have been thought *pacific*, this original, and unrepealed sentence, has either been forgotten, or very little regarded. Yet, that wise and good men should vex one another, and be advocates for such dissensions as the God of Peace condemns, is much to be lamented; and to check, as well as I could, the progress of those crimes, was that Appendix written.

\* Gen. iii. 15.

A SERMON.



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## SERMON, &c.

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Rom. vii. 13.

WAS THEN THAT WHICH IS GOOD MADE DEATH UNTO ME?  
GOD FORBID! BUT SIN THAT IT MIGHT APPEAR SIN,  
WORKING DEATH IN ME BY THAT WHICH IS GOOD;  
THAT SIN BY THE COMMANDMENT MIGHT BECOME  
EXCEEDING SINFUL.

**T**HE writer of this Epistle was once a  
Pharisee; much admired by his brethren for  
his abilities, zeal, and external piety; yet in  
those days, it is certain, he was a blasphemer,  
a persecutor, and an injurious person: un-  
acquainted with the sinfulness of sin, and a  
stranger to the way of salvation by Jesus  
Christ.

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He was not suffered long to continue in that unconverted state. In an unexpected moment, as he was going to Damascus, and came nigh to that city, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, he was converted to christianity. Instantly, what things were gain to him before this event, those he counted loss for Christ.

After his conversion, in what manner he preached at Damascus, at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, often at the hazard of his life, and with what success, you have read in the Acts of the Apostles.

As his years, judgment and faith increased, his labors were still more abundant. Where did he not travel? For whose welfare was he not concerned? Rome lay at a considerable distance from Judea, yet he determined to visit that imperial city, that he might have some fruit among them, even as among other Gentiles. But being hitherto prevented,



prevented, he wrote to the church at Rome this Epistle; which is second to none, even in the New Testament.

From our text it appears, *That the only cause of death is sin.* Nothing but sin can account for the death of rational creatures under the government of God: but as the wages of sin is death, sin is sufficient to account for the death of all mankind. These dreadful, but just wages, all of us must receive, unless we have fled, or are fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. That hope is Jesus Christ: in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

Again; from our text it appears, *That the knowledge of sin is by the law.* For when the Apostle speaks of sin working death in him by that, which is *good*, undoubtedly he means to say, that sin did this by the *law*. Yet we cannot suppose the moral law was the *efficient* cause of his perceiving the exceeding sinfulness of sin: for, while he was  
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under it, though highly applauded by the Pharisees, and sufficiently proud of his own attainments, it plainly appears, he was then an avowed enemy to Jesus Christ, and that he did every thing in his power to destroy them that called upon his name.

Once more ; from our text it appears, *That sin by the commandment, became exceeding sinful.* They who had not the law of Moses, were convinced of sin ; which shews the work of the law written on their hearts. But to sin against the express letter of the moral law ; against all the solemnities, and instructions of the Sinai covenant ; to do this in Judea, and at a time when our Lord himself, had so recently magnified that law by his life, and in his death, this was to be superlatively disobedient.

What must Saul have felt when he first saw what he had done, and what he deserved to suffer ! Yet, when he reflected on his past misconduct, and considered how much his ignorance of sin had led him to treat the  
gospel



gospel of the Son of God with contempt, and the professors of it with rage and madness, we may be sure these exercises of his mental powers increased his painful sensations, and overwhelmed his high spirit with awful consternation.

The affecting views that were then set before him of his own impiety, and of that sea of indwelling sin from which it flowed, must have been insupportable, had he not obtained mercy. But the mercy which Saul obtained in those afflicting moments, was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Thus relieved, his most painful convictions turned very much to his advantage: and we have reason to conclude, as we ourselves are favoured with the same views of sin and grace, we shall find that our deepest convictions of sin will be connected with many benefits, and with many blessings.—This, I shall attempt to prove in the following part of this discourse,

But to prevent mistakes, let it be observed, I do not mean to say, that any thing  
which

which is sinful is, in its own nature, to our advantage. Between sin, and a proper sense of sin, there is a wide difference. So wide in my opinion, that I have long since laid aside the popular expression of God's bringing good out of evil. In moral evil there is no good; and *out of it* no good can come. Yet, I suppose, many have adopted this pleasing phrase, without intending to convey any improper notion by that assertion.

Observe also, that the advantages I have in view, are those only which appertain to *believers* in Jesus Christ. Unbelievers, I own, may be so convinced of sin, and so afraid of eternal judgment, as thereby to be restrained from those transgressions they would otherwise commit. But if they had such a sense of the sinfulness of sin as *believers* frequently have, they would be desperate. When Judas saw what he had done, he went to his own place, by his own hands; and God only knows how many have followed that traitor into everlasting torments.

Having



Having premised so much to prevent mistakes, I will now mention *some* of those advantages which believers enjoy under a proper sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

ONE advantage is, a most vivid assurance of the existence, and of the immediate presence of God.

Many pious people have been strangely assaulted with atheistical thoughts in the beginning, middle, and close of their christian profession. But who ever was much oppressed with those thoughts, when they were bowed down under a deep sense of the sinfulness of sin? In those awful moments, a man is not more certain of his own existence than he is certain that God is, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. As the snow that falls into a flaming furnace, so perishes every atheistical thought which is suggested to such a man. He is ready to say, perhaps does say,

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and

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mine up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo! O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely, the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

Such thoughts of God, in a temper suited to the important subject, are beneficial to every man who makes them his own. They  
argue



argue a becoming reverence and awe of the Almighty ; they divorce the mind from every false alliance, and dispose the heart to accept of that ground of hope that God approves. Be it remembered, that the man who said these things, wrote the fifty-first psalm ; and that in him, a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and strong thoughts of the omniscience, omnipresence, and grace of God, were remarkably united.

A SECOND advantage is, that from such a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, believers obtain a much better knowledge of the sacred scriptures than those who are insensible of the corruption of human nature.

In the scriptures, we read of the law of works, of the law of faith, and of the law of Christ. Those expositors I most esteem, by the law of works, understand the law of the ten commandments ; considered, not simply as a law, but in the form of a covenant ; the tenor of which is, *Do this and live*. By the law of faith, they understand the gospel, or the covenant of grace and truth ; and not a

law of precepts, new, or old. By the law of Christ, they suppose every injunction which is evidently unrepealed under the present dispensation, is included: whether those injunctions are moral, or positive; whether they are to be found in the Pentateuch, or in any other part of the Bible. They add, that the law of works, is the law to be done, that men may be saved by their own obedience; that the law of faith, is the law, or doctrine of the gospel, to be believed, that men may be saved by the obedience of our Lord; and that what is called the law of Christ, is the law of the Saviour to the saved, binding them that believe in him to all the duties of Christian obedience.\*

As a careful attention to these laws, may increase our understanding of the scriptures, the following observations will not be thought impertinent; especially as they will contain

\* Mr. THOMAS BOSTON who wrote the Fourfold State, both in his own works, and in his notes on other authors, has made many remarks on these distinct laws which deserve our notice.

a proof



a proof of that which I now attempt to establish.

If the law of works, and the covenant of works, are the same, the republication of that covenant at Mount Sinai, was not intended to hold forth the possibility of any sinner's being justified before God, by his own obedience. For that covenant gives no consolation to him who has not perfectly fulfilled it: consequently, it affords not a ray of hope to any fallen creature. So long as any man imagines he may possibly be saved by his own obedience, he will not accept of salvation by Jesus Christ. But it is evident, that the covenant of grace, as well as the covenant of works, was republished at Mount Sinai; and in such a manner, that every other transaction at Horeb, was made *subservient* to that better covenant. The truth is, All law is no more than a school-master to Christ, that we might be justified by faith: and that being thus justified, we might have peace with God, and walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

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But when the moral law was given by Moses, the people under his care were not of that opinion. They imagined, that the law required nothing more of them than their future, and sincere obedience unto it, as the *condition* of their being justified in the sight of the Almighty. Afterwards, they saw their error, and were convinced their zeal was not according to knowledge; therefore, they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: for they could not endure that which was commanded. Then, they unanimously requested, God would speak to them in the person of a Mediator; and this request was approved and granted; though it was foreseen they would not long be thankful for that indulgence.—How often must some people be brought to Mount Sinai, and be made again and again to tremble, ere they will perceive the dignity and importance of the *first* of the ten commandments, and ingenuously confess, that except they worship God in faith, as the Lord their God, they cannot rightly regard any other part of the moral law.

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Now, if the law of works is never used *lawfully*, without a sense of the sinfulness of sin, it is not possible, on any other principle, properly to regard the law of faith. Who, that is insensible of the evil of sin, can count all things but loss and dung that he may win Christ, and suffer the loss of all things that he may be found in him? On the contrary, such men have in every age, and in every place, constantly rejected the gospel, supposing, or pretending to suppose, that it contains something that is dangerous to their moral interest, or something that is extremely absurd.

As to the law of Christ, if it binds them that believe in him to all the duties of Christian obedience, they who conscientiously regard his injunctions and example, and look up to him for grace to serve God acceptably, must have fled to him for refuge, believing that he in whom they trust is that Lord to whom they ought to be subject in all things that pertain to life and godliness. But thus to flee to Christ, to trust in him, and to be subject to his revealed will, implies a previous  
sense

sense of the sinfulness of sin, with despair of ever being saved by any other Saviour, or even by the Lord himself, but in that way which he has appointed, and to answer that end for which he laid down his life. (Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9. 2 Cor. v. 15.) The order which our Lord approves is this: BELIEVE, LOVE, OBEY: but unless we are well acquainted with our own depravity, and inability to cleanse ourselves from our gross and refined pollutions, it is evident we have neither faith, love, nor evangelical obedience. So essential is a sense of the sinfulness of sin to every thing which enters into the spirit and practice of true religion; and therefore, is of that consequence in our acquiring a sound acquaintance with the sacred scriptures that has been stated in this discourse.

A THIRD advantage to believers under such a sense of sin is, a wise and humble improvement of providential events.

The providence of God extends to the whole creation. It is the triumph of his divine power



power over all persons, and over all things; and is manifested when, and in what manner he pleases, either to wound, or heal; to kill or to make alive. This irresistible power, is always regulated by the wisdom of his own will; which is immutable amidst all the revolutions of ages, and in all the fluctuating scenes of common life.

Our knowledge of future events is very imperfect. We have a general apprehension of changes; but what in particular, a single day will produce, we cannot discover; nor need we be anxious; since all our times are in his hand, who will safely lead us on through every approaching event, to that rest which yet remains for the people of God.

But when Paul said, I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need; whence had he this ability? His answer is,

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I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. That strength however, was enjoyed by him, under a deep sense of his natural and moral infirmities: thus being diffident of himself, and confident in Christ, he was sufficiently supported. He that said, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! was not likely to be much elated with temporal felicity: and he that thanked God for the hope of his being delivered from that worst of burdens, was not to be dejected, even in a prison.

Compare now, such behaviour with the misconduct of unbelievers. Do they prosper in the world? They are insolent, dissatisfied, or disposed to attribute their success to their own prudence: therefore their days are consumed in vanity, and their years in trouble. Are they poor and afflicted? They either make a jest of their misfortunes, or they are dejected, or turbulent, or inclined to think that their present sufferings will make some atonement for their transgressions.

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In short, unless we ourselves are touched with a serious sense of the evil of sin, and live in belief that there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared, nothing in this world can make us thoroughly contented. Without these blessings, our condition in life, our habitations, connections, families and friends, nay perhaps the very country in which we were born, will be to us so many sources of uneasiness; whereas with the blessings I have mentioned, none of these things are insupportable: far from it, in each of them we find something, and in the whole much, that reconciles us to the providence of God.

You must have observed, that whenever the Jews were most insensible of their transgressions, they were discontented and rebellious. But when, by some prophet, or by some providence, they were compelled to reflect on their iniquities, Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction, and of her miseries, all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old. This is a striking picture

of human folly. May we often look at it and receive instruction!

A FOURTH advantage to believers, under a proper sense of sin, is, that being thus acquainted with themselves, they become more wise and prudent in their behaviour towards their fellow men.

In this world, we cannot always choose our acquaintance, but must mix with many, and be connected with some, that never met with our hearty approbation; as well as be deprived of the company of others, whom we very much esteem. Of the far greater part of mankind now existing, we have no knowledge; and even of those who are placed within our notice, how little do we know of them and of their affairs? It becomes us therefore, to be cautious in forming voluntary connections, lest we live at random, or suffer ourselves to be too scrupulous, by giving way to ungenerous, and unfair surmises. How much a just sense of the sinfulness of sin contributes to produce such circumspection,



tion, they who are favoured with it need not be informed.

With men who are high in office, and of distinguished abilities in public life, we are seldom permitted to discourse. Yet most of us, I presume, are sufficiently inclined to give our opinions of them, and to talk freely of their proceedings. Here, the pass between duty and danger is very narrow; and often unobserved. What indecent liberties some have taken with public characters, from what motives, and with what effect, you are well acquainted. But were those men think you, burdened with a sense of their own depravity, while they were railing against their betters? or were they then blessed with a truly christian temper? You cannot be of that opinion; since you know that good Christians of every denomination, avoid even the shadow of sedition, and without guile, fear God and honor the King.

If they are members of such churches as we are best acquainted with, and most of all  
esteem,

esteem, they have probably, more than once observed, that in them there are many imperfections. If they are pastors or deacons, they must know that their best efforts to serve their friends have sometimes been suspected, and often over-ruled. If they are members or pastors of other Churches, I am well informed they have as little power to do good, and are as frequently opposed in attempting to discharge some branches of their duty as other people. These facts make them slow to speak, and slow to wrath, when the conduct of their civil rulers is violently censured. They consider the importance of their office to the peace of society, and think of the wide and turbulent sphere in which they are obliged to act. They consider that statesmen and magistrates by their condition in life, and by the nature of their authority, (which requires coercive energy to support it,) are "a mark for malice and a but for envy," as all their predecessors were. They cannot therefore unite with artful, restless men, who, under a pretence of rectifying all our disorders, would throw all things into confusion.



sion. The wish of a real christian is to overcome evil with good. His second wish is, not to be overcome of evil; and it is his final resolution, not to do evil that good may come.

But we are chiefly concerned with those who occupy a private station; with men who have only to manage their own little affairs, and who are not burdened with an upright ruler's care, nor bowed down with a corrupt magistrate's accusing conscience.

Our acquaintance then, may be considered either as being pious, or ungodly. If they are truly pious, what communion can we have with them, while we ourselves remain insensible of the sinfulness of sin? since in their Christian conversation, they continually advert to the depravity of human nature; either as they are disposed to bewail their own moral infirmities, or the iniquity of the times, or, as they are inclined to rejoice in him who taketh away the sin of the world. If our acquaintance are ungodly, especially if their profanity is connected with wit and  
wealth,

wealth, (which is no uncommon junction,) their friendship must be to us injurious; unless we are able to discern and abhor that which is evil in their behaviour, and to cleave stedfastly to that which is good.

Let me just add, that if any of our acquaintance are in such a state that we cannot be certain whether they are pious or profane, only by the same principles, and by the same disposition, can we be preserved from being too free with them, or from being too severe in our reproofs: extremes which every good man wishes to avoid; but extremes which the best of men are too apt to indulge.

A FIFTH advantage to believers, with a proper sense of the sinfulness of sin, is, an unfeigned, and judicious regard to every known duty under the gospel dispensation.

What duties are peculiar to different characters, in certain situations, may be matter of dispute; but when the will of our Lord  
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is manifest, they who believe in him yield that submission to it that cannot be expected from other people: and we shall soon see how much a sense of the sinfulness of sin leads them to such obedience.

No man of himself, is able to serve God acceptably; but must have grace to give him glory. When we are thus indulged, duty is no longer a burden, or a task; much less is it considered as meritorious; no, it is then regarded as a mean of holding communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and as the appointed way to obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need.

*Moral* duties are commonly supposed to include love to God, and love to man. But God will be loved by us as the God of all grace, and as that sovereign Being who will be gracious to whom he will be gracious. He who does not thus love God, does not know him as the God of his salvation. Man likewise must be loved as being what he really

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is,

is, with all his infirmities about him, and not under any false notion of his being what he is not. But how is it possible thus to love God as God, and man as men now are, if we do not credit the scripture account of our fall in Adam, and of our redemption by Jesus Christ. He that loves God is willing to lie at his mercy, and to expect from it salvation. He that loves his neighbor to do him good, loves him for that grace and truth which he has received, or so loves him as to recommend the gospel of Christ to his attention.

As to *positive* duties under the New Testament, they cannot be properly regarded by any person who does not see and lament his own pollution; nor by any who imagines he can cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit.

If the Lord's day is a positive institution, how are we to hear from the pulpit any thing that is worth our notice, on the weekly returns of that distinguished day, if we do not  
know



know that we are sinful creatures, and believe that of God, Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?

In reference to baptism and the Lord's supper, it is plain, that where a sense of the sinfulness of sin is wanting, those ordinances must either be neglected, or abused. To baptise the ignorant, or the impenitent, seems a presumptuous, and preposterous undertaking: and to allow such communicants to sit down with believers at the Lord's table, as if they had the same right to be there, and the same business to transact, is a grant not founded on scripture, nor to be defended by common sense.

ANOTHER, and the last advantage I shall now mention, is, that a proper sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin make believers more earnest to obtain a solid hope of heaven, and is likewise a mean of making them more meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Little as any of us know of that inheritance, we believe that our future happiness will very much consist in the worship of God; in our adoring him as the *Alpha* and *Omega* of all our consolation; and in owning, with all the heavenly hosts, that God is the efficient and final cause of every thing in the whole creation.

For this state of worship we must be made meet in this world, or never expect to join the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly, and church of the first born which is written, or inrolled, in heaven. If so, between spiritual worship in this world, and the worship of the future state, there must be great resemblance. Here indeed, our worship is frequently interrupted, and always imperfect: yet here, the object whom we adore, the ground of our access, and the end of our public and private devotions, are so much the same with that of the spirits of just men made perfect, that it is difficult to say, whether in some parts of the sacred scripture, we read of the church triumphant,  
or



or of that devotion which has been on earth,  
or of the united service of saints and angels  
before the throne.

John having told us that he saw in his vision the servants of God among the twelve tribes sealed in their foreheads, adds, after this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, (or living creatures,) and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Now,

Now, if it is difficult to say, whether John in these verses, and in some other parts of this mysterious book, speaks of that worship which has been, or may be on earth, or of that only which is in heaven, the reason, (as has been noticed,) is, because spiritual worship is every where so much the same. The redeemed in heaven and on earth, do now say, and will always say, Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

From the whole that has been advanced, I conclude, that a proper sense of our depravity is of great service to believers from the first moment they obtain that favor to the last exertion of their mental powers in this world: and though in the future state, the pain and shame that now attends a full conviction of the sinfulness of sin will be removed, we have no reason to suppose that in heaven itself, the memory of our former follies will ever be destroyed.

WHO



WHO would have thought that so many and great advantages were to be enjoyed under, or with the strongest impressions of the sinfulness of sin? But that these and other substantial advantages are thus enjoyed by believers in Jesus Christ, a cloud of credible witnesses have attested, and a great number of living witnesses, worthy of credit, continue to attest. I hope, and believe, that such witnesses are now before me; and though I do not wish my testimony should be taken for more than it is worth, yet I think it both my duty and my mercy to bear witness with you, and now before you of the same fact.

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LET us *confess*, my Brethren, that such a way of saving sinners; of laying them low, keeping them humble, and yet giving them hope of a blissful immortality, is no where revealed, but in the word of God.

They who have seen and read the best things ancient and modern philosophers have  
said

said on human virtues, and on human happiness, assure us, that they have met with nothing in their works that can make us wise unto salvation: and they observe, that though modern philosophers frequently quote, and sometimes pretend to expound the scriptures, the most celebrated amongst them, under pretence of exploding the corruptions of christianity, have hardly left us any thing that is truly Christian in their labored dissertations. Philosophy will always be respected within her own precincts, by men of understanding; but on forbidden ground she will be treated with deserved neglect by them who fear God, and who are well acquainted with revealed religion. Beware therefore, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit; after the tradition of men; after the rudiments of this world, and not after Christ.

Instead of amusing ourselves with idle disquisitions, or spending our money for that which is not bread, let us *pray* for such a sense of the evil of sin, that we may reap all the advantages from it which have been mentioned,



mentioned, and every other advantage connected with a sound sense of our own depravity.

Never imagine that you can properly *impress* your own minds with your own state. This is impossible. The first view the Apostle had of the exceeding sinfulness of sin was unexpected; and it was of God. Think not, it is enough to perceive and lament your own overt-acts; all of them proceed and come forth from that flesh in which dwelleth no good thing. Those sins you most of all abhor, may be so connected with other crimes to which you are strongly tempted, that, in some unguarded moment, you may commit them without much resistance. He who said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? soon did what Elisha had predicted; and we know not that Hazael ever repented, either of the murder of the King, his master, or of his other abominations. Death itself, does not always bring with it a proper sense of sin to dying men. Many have trifled, been stupid, or vain glorious,

rious, in their last moments; and it will be our mercy, if we may depart in a more serious temper. The most affecting views of our own misconduct will not then confound us, provided we continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel.

But *take heed* lest at any time, you give way to superstitious scruples, or to those persons who will take more pains to augment your terror than to impart substantial consolation.

There are some people who seem to have made an *eleventh* commandment, which may be called, *obedience to themselves*: or to speak more properly, who carry about with them such an exposition of the *ten* commandments, as amounts to the same thing. Take heed of these EXPOSITORS. They will aggravate all offences they are not *known* to commit, and depreciate every virtue for which they have no relish. They are of all parties, and of all professions; and as often  
to



to be met with in obscure situations as in a dignified condition. Happy is the man who is not teased with their impertinence, or who knows how to treat it according to its desert.

Again; as none but God can give us that sense of sin which shall terminate in our advantage, let us not be *offended* when he is pleased to multiply our convictions.

God has an undoubted right to rebuke and chasten us when, and by whom he thinks proper. If he commands the righteous to smite us, or permits evil men in evil tempers to reproach us, or if he thinks fit to bring our sins to remembrance by personal, relative, or national afflictions, let us endeavour to say, *Even so, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* For though our chastisements may be greivous, they are merciful; and afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. Fear not the loss of any thing when you are reprov'd, but the loss of a good conscience. Remem-

ber, when you are chastened of the Lord, it is that you should not be condemned with the world.

Farther; as none but God can give us that sense of sin which can terminate in our advantage, let us be more watchful against every thing that may *stifle* those convictions we are unable to produce.

Watch against pride; it is highly offensive to God in all its forms, and under every possible appearance; most of all when it originates from a self righteous disposition. Take heed of unbelief; it is the root of pride, and of every moral evil; it is an error in judgment, and the immediate source of every irregular passion. Avoid criminal curiosity; of that there is no end; and were we thoroughly stedfast in the faith, of that there would be no beginning. Dread the approach of grosser offences; nor flatter yourself that if impurity of spirit is indulged; that the filthiness of the flesh will always be denied. Beware of men; above all of those men who  
have



have a name to live, and yet are dead. From such turn away. Take care also, what you read; the trash that is daily turned upon the town, under artful, and vain pretences, will justify this caution; nor will you read much without perceiving the propriety of this advice.

Once more; in your lowest moments let me intreat you, never to *accept* from any person, unsound consolation.

You need it not; nor can it, in any situation, be worth your notice. When fallen by your own iniquities, you are allowed to take with you words, and turn to the Lord, and to say unto him, Take away *all* iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips. Reject then, every improper alliance, and every illicit mode of deliverance. Should you ever be disposed to confide in an arm of flesh, in that moment, you must have but feeble notions of the sinfulness of sin. Whereas, all that are taught of God are disposed to say unto him,

him, If thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquity,  
 O Lord, who shall stand! yet they add,  
 But there is forgiveness with thee that thou  
 mayest be feared. Thus they are saved  
 from arrogance and despair, and from every  
 improper course of action. While you  
 keep these things in view with pleasure,  
 ye will be victorious over sin, death, and  
 hell, but if ye lose sight of this mercy,  
 or if the report of it should be your vexa-  
 tion, assuredly, ye will become as weak as  
 other men.

To conclude; whenever you are converted  
 from some particular error, or from some  
 vicious action, *strengthen* your brethren.

Remind them of the great and glorious  
 name in which you were brought to put  
 your trust. Assure them you found it a  
 strong tower when every other refuge failed;  
 and even when no man cared for your souls.  
 Tell them that name \* in which you confide,  
 is only to be found in Jesus Christ. Speak  
 freely

\* Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7.



freely of his compassion towards you, when you had done much to provoke him to depart, and to leave you alone to die in your sins. Pray with your brethren and for them in their afflictions; not to save appearances, but as those in earnest, and as being interested in their salvation. Be their advocate before men in things that admit of fair defence; and their intercessor when an attempt to defend their conduct would be injudicious.— Thus, my dear friends, may each of us improve the serious subject; and in every other way that can adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour! Amen.

## APPENDIX.

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## APPENDIX.

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THE peculiar sentiments propagated by Antinomians and Arminians, existed in the earliest period of ecclesiastical history. When the term Antinomians was first applied to a faction in the church, it was considered as a name of character, and was held up as a kind of scare crow to alarm the timid, and to abash the bold. The people who were thus stigmatized, were said, not only to be immoral, but to be a set of monsters; or men who pleaded for the innocence of the worst of errors, and who actually renounced the rule of moral action. But their opponents, as in the case of Stephen, set up false witnesses against them, who said, These men speak blasphemous words against the law. This *odious* name however, was too justly applied to some at the commencement of the Reformation;



Reformation ; and it is *now* perhaps, too applicable to various professors of the Christian religion.

The other factious term, Arminians, is of later date ; and originally signified no more than this ; that they who *arminianized* were the followers of a celebrated professor at Leyden, whose name was James Arminius : a man who found some men of note to espouse, and abet his cause ; but who met with others of superior abilities, that detected his errors, and refuted his ensnaring propositions.—The Arminians were also called *Remonstrants*, from a remonstrance which they presented to the States General, in the year 1611.

Between these contending parties, from the first onset to the present hour, there has been no truce ; nor is there *now* the least appearance that hostilities will cease. But, how often the ground of their controversy has been changed, and who have been the most distinguished champions in their debates, is not material to be noticed in this Appendix.

At *present*, Antinomians contend, that all Arminians are under the covenant of works; that they are enemies to the doctrines of grace, and that they seek to be justified in the sight of God by the merit of their own personal obedience. On the other side, Arminians contend, that Antinomians are an abandoned set of people; that they will not allow the moral law to be a rule of their behaviour; that they do what they can to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and to make the doctrines of it offensive to sober people.

These severe charges, are not so often refuted, as denied to be just; and denied, on both sides, with that want of temper, that has produced unpleasant effects. After all this, who would suppose such adversaries held in common, any principle equally subservient to each others hypothesis? Yet more may be said to shew that so it really is, than is likely to be refuted.

An Antinomian cannot think himself under any religious obligation to regard the moral law as the rule of his conduct; for, being perfectly



perfectly justified, as he supposes, by Jesus Christ, he concludes it would be inglorious for him to be subject to any branch of legislative authority. In short, as he thinks he cannot save himself by any act of his own obedience, he is not disposed to serve God in newness of life.

This temper, and the error on which it rests, proceeds from a self-righteous disposition. An Antinomian does in effect say, “ As I  
 “ have nothing to do on my *own* account,  
 “ I will not be compelled to be obedient on  
 “ any *other* consideration. As I am not  
 “ under the law of works, but delivered  
 “ from it by the law of faith, I am resolved  
 “ to walk at liberty, and to make my own  
 “ will the rule of my own actions.”

An Arminian indeed, will not allow that he is completely justified by Jesus Christ; but he often says, “ Could I believe that  
 “ dangerous doctrine, and other doctrines  
 “ usually held with it, I own, my passions  
 “ would be unrestrained, and that by such  
 “ sentiments, I should become immoral and

“ profane.” This again, is in effect to say,  
 “ As I should then have nothing to do on  
 “ my *own* account, I should not think myself  
 “ obliged to be obedient on any *other* con-  
 “ sideration, As then, I should not be  
 “ under the law of works, but dead to it,  
 “ and it to me, I should certainly be inclined  
 “ to walk at liberty, and to make my own  
 “ will the rule of my own actions,”

“ How easy,” (as a respectable author  
 has justly observed,) “ is the passage from  
 “ Legalism to Antinomianism!” And, in  
 passing, we may remark, what sordid notions  
 these people have of *liberty*. Like our Anti-  
 nomians in the State, they are either unable,  
 or unwilling to distinguish between real free-  
 dom and that licentiousness which every  
 sober mind abhors. But no matter. What  
 is commonly called liberty, is of such uni-  
 versal prevalence, and so little liable to create  
 offence, that it may be successful even in  
 the most unskilful hands; and scarce any  
 indiscretion can frustrate its operations.\*

It

\* See what Hume has said on the policy of the court  
 of Rome in his history of Henry I.

It is however, curious to perceive, that Antinomians and Arminians, without any settled compact between themselves, seem at bottom, to be so well agreed in sentiment and taste, that a well informed, and unprejudiced by-stander, wonders they should live any longer at variance.—But, who are to be charged with these errors, and with these dispositions, it is not my business, nor is it my intention to decide. As in many things we all offend, let us take care that we impeach no man unjustly, and that we attempt to make no one guilty by artful constructions.

It is but just to acknowledge, many excellent men have been called Antinomians; nor can we yet expect, that those preachers who are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, will always be able to avoid the same reproach. From the same regard to justice, it becomes us to acknowledge, that many excellent men have been called Arminians; nor is it probable, that while some worthy ministers endeavor to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of  
 God,



God, they will yet be able to escape such illiberal censure.

As for those who publickly own they are Arminians, even in *print*, it would ill become them to be offended if their readers should give them credit for their sincerity. But it seems strange, that any man who fears God should be terrified because *others* should say, he is either an Antinomian, or an Arminian, or a certain something, they know not what, between the two. Surely, we are not re-deemed to be held in bondage by promiscuous censure, nor to tremble at the loose, or invidious decisions of men not having, or not using a good understanding. It is as inglorious to court their smiles, as to fear their frowns. On the contrary, it is much to be lamented, that men who are able to edify one another, will not read what is written for that purpose, by giving way to prejudices as futile as they are unjust, and as remote from christian charity as they are distant from common sense.

Yet

Yet christian charity is not blind. She rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Her joy is always joy with judgment; and where *that* is wanting, what is commonly called charity, though highly applauded, is but of little value. If then, we should meet with men who are able to dress up the worst of errors in the alluring appearance of truth, what could effectually preserve us against their fraud, and from their cunning? Nothing, in my opinion, but that grace which bringeth salvation, and which teaches the receivers of it, that denying all ungodliness and wordly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

They who are thus taught, and are favored with that *unction*\* which John affirms the primitive Christians had, are neither Antinomians nor Arminians. Not Antinomians; for though they believe they are completely justified by Jesus Christ, they are zealous of  
those

\* 1 John ii. 27.



those good works which shew that with the heart they have believed unto righteousness, and that with the mouth they have made confession unto salvation.—Not Arminians; because they not only differ from them in many things, but in particular, it is manifest, that the doctrines of grace have no such influence on their minds as Arminians assure us that what are so called would have on them, could they receive those doctrines as articles of faith.

On a serious review of this subject, I infer, that a Christian is a kind of MIDDLE MAN between real Antinomians and fixed Arminians; that he is unlike either, and superior to both.

The former part of this inference has been proved already. The latter is equally evident; for, by divine grace, a Christian is possessed of that knowledge, they cannot approve; of that resignation to sovereign grace, they cannot admire, and is brought into that state of cheerful subjection to Jesus Christ,



Christ, which neither Antinomians nor Arminians are willing to endure. Christians therefore, (circumcised in heart to love him who is LORD OF ALL, to love him who has written his own laws in their minds, and who is himself the end of all law for their justification,) serve their Saviour with gladness, and come before his presence with rejoicing.

It is true, that with all these mercies, they are exposed to manifold temptations, and are grievously vexed at the insurrections of indwelling sin in the whole course of their Christian obedience. They feel that the flesh lusteth against the spirit; they confess they cannot do the things that they would; and they often say, Who shall deliver us from the body of this death? Nevertheless, as God hath promised them deliverance, and as he worketh in them both to will, and to do of his good pleasure; on belief of this, to yield to the operations of his Spirit is their chief delight; but to *live* after the flesh seems

G

to

to them—not only dangerous, and horrid, but also—impossible.

Thus conducted and upheld, whenever they are overtaken with a fault, and thoroughly sensible of it, they cannot be satisfied with a mere conversion from sin to duty, but desire to be reconverted to Christ, and to re-enjoy communion with him ; being confident, that if he restoreth their souls, he will lead them into paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Into these paths may our Sovereign Shepherd continually lead us for his name's sake ! Then idle disputes between good men will be lamented, and the scuffles of bad men for emolument and power honestly disdained. Then, whether people are named Catholics or Lutherans, Calvinists or Remonstrants, Conformists or Non-conformists, Whigs or Tories, we shall judge of them, not by these names, but by the leading articles of their avowed belief, and by the tenor of their conversation.

It



It is said of the celebrated Witsius, that he had an aversion to all unreasonable novel-  
ties in doctrine, and, at the same time, a  
great moderation toward such persons as  
differed from him. It is also said, that he  
neither chose to be dictated to, nor to dic-  
tate ; that he followed no party, and that he  
formed none.—In such a temper may we  
live and die !

Now the God of peace that brought again  
from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great  
Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of  
the everlasting covenant, make us perfect  
in every good work to do his will, working  
in us that which is well pleasing in his sight  
through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for  
ever and ever. AMEN.

### THE END.

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#### ERRATA.

- In page 7, *for been read been.*  
In page 27, *for make read makes.*  
In page 36, *for yourself read yourselves.*  
In page 43, *for proceeds read proceed.*



( 12 )

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